

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for
Organization: Eastham Historical Commission
Date (*month / year*): April 2025

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

5-416

Orleans

EAS.1257

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): North Eastham

Address: 280 Aspinet Road

Historic Name: Margaret C. Fenn House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1938

Source: Deed research, 1938 USGS aerial survey

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Two small sheds

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

New windows (dates unknown)

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.60 acres

Setting: The property is situated on an early rural road that was once agricultural with a few farmsteads but is now subdivided with numerous houses from the mid- to late-20th century. The house is centered on its level parcel. There is an informal parking area east of the house. The property is landscaped with expanses of lawn, scrub pines, and mature foundation plantings.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

280 ASPINET ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Margaret C. Fenn House, built in 1938, is a one-story, side-gable cottage. The form consists of a one-story main block, with a slightly stepped down ell on the right (east) side. The building is clad in weathered wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles and has a slightly projecting box cornice. The front entrance with wood panel door appears to be centered on the main block. To the right of the entrance are two mullioned windows with modern, thermal 1/1 windows. To the left of the entrance is a small square window and a projecting porch with low-pitched shed roof that is integrated into the body of the cottage. The porch also has 1/1 windows, some of which appear to be wood and may be early if not original. The front door and windows abut the roof entablature, indicating a low wall height. The right (east) side elevation has a small, centered window above basement access doors. The left (west) elevation has the same centered window.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay in Orleans and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

As can be seen from the 1910 Barnstable County Atlas, Aspinet Road remained very sparsely settled into the early-20th century (Figure 2). The road was originally referred to as Aspinette Road. The land on which this cottage was built was originally owned by Samuel F. Brackett.

Samuel F. Brackett was very active in Eastham real estate between 1898 and 1944, and owned the land to the east and north of this parcel. He was also the owner from 1903 to ca. 1929 of the General Store at 580 Massasoit Road (EAS.77). The MHC Form B for that property provides the following information about Brackett:

The son of Elkanah C. Brackett (1809-91) and his second wife Achsah Snow Crosby Smith (1823-1903), Samuel F. Brackett was born in 1864, and by 1880 he and his older brother George B. were doing farm work, but they began to invest in real estate and to build cottages for summer residents by the turn of the century; the *Yarmouth Register* reported that Samuel Brackett owned a tourist trailer camp on Massasoit Road in the late 1930s. George B. Brackett largely remained a farmer, but when Samuel Brackett married Anna S. Eldredge of Wellfleet in 1888 he was a trader. The couple moved to the former Scotter Cobb house at 670 Massasoit Road (EAS.80) after their marriage, and in 1900 Brackett was listed in the census as a grocer. He and his wife had one son, Samuel H. Brackett, in 1806 [sic], and in 1910 Annie Brackett's elderly father Gideon Eldredge lived with the family. By 1929 Brackett had retired from running the store and turned its management over to his son.

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This house has an Assessor date of 1930, and the house is shown in the 1938 United States Geological Survey (USGS) aerial survey of Cape Cod (Photo 3). Title research goes back to early 1938, when Samuel F. Brackett sold this small parcel of land to Margaret C. Fenn, of Eastham.¹ The deed, which does not reference any buildings, was signed on January 31st and recorded on March 3, 1938. It is unknown exactly when the USGS survey in 1938 was conducted but it is possible that Margaret Fenn built this cottage in time to be photographed that year.

Little has been discovered about Margaret C. Fenn. A search of vital records and newspaper archives did not connect Margaret Fenn to Eastham. There is one 1940 census record for a Margaret C. Fenn, born in Connecticut in ca. 1896, who was divorced, living as a boarder in Orleans, and working as a housekeeper. The name Margaret C. Fenn also appears in 1930s newspaper archives as a soloist for churches in Brewster and Dennis. Whether that is the same lady is unclear. In late 1948, Fenn sold this parcel to Anastasia M. and William G. Noke, Jr. of Eastham.²

In January 1949, this parcel became part of a 7-lot subdivision plan petitioned by William Bradley Steele (Plan 22035A, Figure 3). William Steele was not the owner of this parcel, but the Nokes filed a motion with the Land Court to be substituted as the petitioners for this parcel. William G. Noke, Jr. (1913-1974) was one of ten children of England-born William, Sr. and Evelyn Noke. William, Jr. married Anastasia Mary Chiklik in Waltham in 1935. As of the 1940 census, Anastasia and William, Jr. were still living with his parents and nine siblings. His father was "Superintendent Garages" and William, Jr. was listed as "Mechanic Garage" – possibly working for his father. After having bought this cottage in 1948, they were listed living here on the 1950 census, and he was now working as a house carpenter.

In 1954, the Nokes sold this cottage to Louis Ruggiero of Milford, MA.³ New Jersey-born Louis J. Ruggiero (1939-2018) lived in Milford during his ownership of this house, where he worked as a self-employed building contractor. He sold this cottage in 1966 to Alfred M. and Maude A. Martel of Holyoke, MA.⁴ The house remains in the Martel family.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 536/ Page 569.

² Book 713/ Page 95.

³ Book 943/ Page 172.

⁴ Book 1353/ Page 765.

